

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0220

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: WILL MIGHTY PIERRE SLAY TWO DRAGONS WITH A SINGLE BLOW?

1. FEDERAL LIBERAL PARTY'S IMPRESSIVE SUCCESS IN WINNING FIVE OF SIX RECENT FEDERAL BYELECTIONS HAS ENCOURAGED SPECULATION AMONG QUEBECOIS AS TO HOW ELECTION VICTORY MIGHT AFFECT LOOMING CONSTITUTIONAL STRUGGLE. GROWING NUMBERS OF POLITICALLY ENGAGED OBSERVERS IN QUEBEC OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS ARE CONVINCED TRUDEAU WILL CALL GENERAL ELECTION THIS COMING FALL. THEY ARGUE THAT HE WILL NOT MISS OPPORTUNITY PROFIT FROM CREST OF POPULARITY WAVE HE IS NOW RIDING AND TO EXPLOIT DISARRAY AMONG CONSERVATIVES CAUSED BY HUMILIATING ELECTION DEFEAT AND SUBSEQUENT NADIR IN JOE CLARK'S REPUTATION AS LEADER. DAVIS' LACK OF SUCCESS IN RECENT ONTARIO ELECTION INDUCED SOME DOUBTS AS TO EARLY GENERAL ELECTION, BUT PREDOMINANT OPINION STILL VIEWS FALL ELECTION AS LIKELY.

2. ONE CLOSE ADVISOR TO CLAUDE MORIN RECENTLY TOLD ME THAT HE BELIEVES TRUDEAU MANOEUVRE WILL BE INITIATED BY OFFER TO PQ OF CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE, WHICH HE KNOWS QUEBECOIS MUST REFUSE OUT-OF-HAND. WHEN GOQ GIVES PREDICTABLE RESPONSE, TRUDEAU
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WILL USE THIS "REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE" AS EXCUSE FOR SEEKING FRESH MANDATE "TO DEFEND THREATENED NATIONAL UNITY." SINCE THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE FEDERAL LEVEL OPPOSITION TO LIBERALS IN QUEBEC, AND PQ CAN NOT INTERVENE EVEN CLANDESTINELY IN FEDERAL ELECTION WITHOUT BEING DAMAGED, SOURCE REASONS THAT LIBERALS ARE LIKELY CARRY PROVINCE OVERWHELMINGLY. TRUDEAU WILL THEN ATTEMPT PICTURE HIS PARTY'S LARGE VOTE IN QUEBEC AS A SORT OF REFERENDUM

WHICH DEMONSTRATES MAJORITY OF QUEBECOIS DO NOT WISH INDEPENDENCE.

3. MY SOURCE SEEMS TO REFLECT CONCERN AMONG SOME ELEMENTS IN GOQ THAT SUCH A TRUDEAU STRATEGEM COULD TAKE INITIATIVE AWAY FROM PQ, SHORT-CIRCUIT THEIR ATTEMPT CONVINCE PEOPLE THAT QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY IS INEVITABLE AND WEAKEN CHANCES FOR SUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM BY BREAKING MOMENTUM OF ALREADY LAUNCHED PQ "EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN." SOURCE SAYS HE IS NOT SURE HOW RENE LEVESQUE WILL DEAL WITH THIS POTENTIAL THREAT.

4. ANOTHER SOURCE, FEDERAL LIBERAL MP FROM QUEBEC, LOUIS DUCLOS, TOLD ME IN RECENT PRIVATE CONVERSATION THAT HE ALSO EXPECTS TRUDEAU HOLD ELECTION THIS FALL. FOLLOWING ANTICIPATED VICTORY IN THIS ELECTION, DUCLOS BELIEVES PRIME MINISTER WILL MAKE RELATIVELY GENEROUS CONSTITUTIONAL OFFER TO QUEBEC WHICH PM WILL ANNOUNCE SHORTLY BEFORE ANTICIPATED QUEBEC REFERENDUM. DUCLOS EXPECTS REFERENDUM THEN WILL BE DEFEATED AND TRUDEAU WILL RESIGN AS PM HAVING CAPPED A BRILLIANT CAREER WITH LCOLNESQUE ACHIEVEMENT OF SAVING HIS COUNTRY FROM BREAKUP. JOHN TURNER WILL THEN SUCCEED TO LIBERAL LEADERSHIP AND BECOME PM, DUCLOS IS CONVINCED. NEW PM, WHO IS REASONABLY WELL THOUGHT OF IN QUEBEC, WOULD THEN COMMENCE NEGOTIATIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL DECENTRALIZATION WITH QUEBEC AND, PERHAPS, WITH OTHER PROVINCES. DUCLOS RECKONS THIS SCENARIO MAY BE PLAYED OUT WITHIN NEXT 30 MONTHS.

5. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO GAUGE MR. TRUDEAU'S CONFIDENTIAL

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ELECTION INTENTIONS FROM QUEBEC, AN OVERWHELMING LIBERAL VICTORY IN QUEBEC WOULD CERTAINLY WEAKEN PQ EFFORTS--IN SHORT TERM AT LEAST-- TO HOLD SUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM. THIS ADVANTAGE, COUPLED WITH CHANCE TO AGAIN SMITE HIS OPPOSITION, DO SEEM LIKELY ENCOURAGE PM TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER FALL ELECTION. MCNAMARA

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